

AFRICAN COLONIZATION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

HON. JOHN H. B. LATROBE,

President of the American Colonization Society,

AT THE

ANNIVERSARY MEETING OF THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION
SOCIETY, HELD IN THE HALL OF THE HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES, WASHINGTON CITY,

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Resolution of Board of Directors, January 22, 1862.

Resolved, That the Address delivered last evening before the Society by its President, the Hon. JOHN H. B. LATROBE, be promptly issued in pamphlet form for gratuitous circulation.

COLONIZATION.

Never, perhaps, since Finley, in 1816, proclaimed that "he knew the scheme of African colonization was from God," has the anniversary meeting been called to order with more profound emotion than is now felt by the presiding officer. Nor does he doubt, in the least, that his hearers participate in his feelings.

The great statesmen who launched the ship of our cause, at the instigation of the New Jersey clergyman—Jefferson, Madison, Randolph, Harper, Mercer, Clay—confided it at once to the philanthropists who have since plied its oars and trimmed its sails, as with varying speed, it has pursued its way under a summer sky and upon placid waters; and the periodical records of the voyage have been heretofore, almost always, illuminated, richly as a missal of old times, with the gay colors and the golden tracery which hopeful enthusiasm spread upon their pages with a lavish hand, in these halcyon days of prosperity and peace. But now, the same ship, to pursue the simile, though still keeping its course, presses onward through angry waves and beneath a threatening heaven. The thunder of artillery, the clangor of trumpets, the roll of drums, the clash of steel, are echoing on all sides; and were the narrative of its progress to embrace the current events of cotemporary history, it would contain many a sad episode of battle and death,

with all the miserable accompaniments of civil war. That it lives in such a sea, and amid such surroundings, stauncher than ever, is alone conclusive proof of the divinity of its origin.

The early advocates of African colonization looked to it as a means of improving the condition of the free people of color, morally and politically; of separating them from a contact with the slaves, that was prejudicial to both parties; or of civilizing and christianizing Africa, according to their respective stand-points.— But it does not appear that any of them, even among the statesmen we have named, appreciated the great truth on which, in fact, the whole scheme depended for success, and which was, that “*two free races, between whom amalgamation, by intermarriage, was impossible, could never occupy the same land, in peace, on terms of social and political equality.*” This, which may be regarded as a fixed and absolute law of races, has been gradually and slowly developing itself in this country, and in this connexion, during the last forty years. There was little or nothing in 1816 to suggest it. History, which amply illustrates it, was a sealed book, whose teachings were valueless, simply because no one turned to its pages to discover them. The population of eight millions, then, was so small, in comparison with the extent of our country, that the latter was assumed to be, for all practical purposes, illimitable.— But when the census of 1850 gave a population of 23,000,000, and that of 1860 a population of 32,000,000, to become, upon the data furnished by eight decennial enumerations, 100,000,000 in 1900, and upwards of 200,000,000 in 1930, this law of races, with its inevitable consequences, became so obvious that it could no longer be overlooked. It was to provide for its operation, to be prepared for the exigency of the exodus of a whole people, that the scheme of colonization, requiring, in this instance, patient labor, supported by faith and hope, to mature it, came into existence five and forty years ago, and that Liberia, afterwards, assumed its place among

the nations ; and to Him who filled the mind of Finley with the plan, who softened the hearts of those whom he invoked to aid him, and who has since strengthened the weak hands which have labored in the cause, be ascribed the honor and the glory.

Three years ago, from this platform, the present speaker ventured to use these words : "Ceasing to be ignored by the politicians of the day, philanthropy shall yet be thanked by statesmanship for what it has accomplished on the coast of Africa." The prediction has already been, to some extent, fulfilled ; and public men, amid all the excitements of the hour, are even now studying plans of colonization, with a view of providing new homes for those who, as was said on the same occasion, "must go somewhere." The times have forced the question upon them even earlier than was anticipated.

But, as with inventors, so it often is with politicians. Ingenuity exhausts itself in reinvention ; and old and discarded things are apt to be adopted as original, because investigation has been postponed until the urgency of occasion has prevented it from being thorough. Thus, at present, colonization in the West Indies, colonization in Central America, colonization in South America, are being discussed and urged, when each of these schemes has, years ago, been examined, weighed, and abandoned. Colonization in the Territories of the United States has been already tried, and with results too, that ought to be eminently suggestive ; for the Indian transplanted by us beyond the Mississippi has, long since, required agents to protect him from the intrusion of the white man ; and many a longing eye is being cast, from beyond the Indian border, upon the broad prairies and the tall forests, where the descendants of the original possessors of the whole land are feebly endeavoring to protract the term of an existence which is rapidly drawing to its close.

As it is with the home of the Indian beyond the Mississippi, so

will it be with every spot on the American continent, and with every adjacent island on which the white man can live and thrive; and to establish a free colored people upon either continent or island will be but to bequeath the struggle of races to a future generation, when, the numbers being greater and the enmity more bitter, while the area of the strife remains the same, the contest will be fiercer, without the smallest change in the result.

And what will be this result? What but the extirpation of the weaker party or its removal to a home where the white man cannot follow it: not because of the intervening sea, because steam has bridged the sea, but because pestilence and death, with swords of flame, debar the white man's entrance. Africa is this home and Liberia is its portal.

It is true, that in speaking thus emphatically we are looking to the future; but then, is it not for the future that we are called upon to provide? The vice of the politicians of the day is that they deal with the present as though it were unchangeable. They legislate for thirty-two millions of people without reference to the decennial increase of thirty-four and a half per cent. They delight in make-shifts. They are enamored of emollients. They lose sight of the fact, that the arable lands of the United States are a fixed quantity, by far, very far, the greater part of which has long been taken up, while the population of the country must increase from thirty-two millions to two hundred and thirty-two millions in a life-time from to-day. They forget the effect that a redundant population must have upon wages, and ignore the idea that the latter can ever approach the European standard on this side of the Atlantic. The possible consequences of such a result, its influence upon the great questions now agitating the country, they have not yet considered. This is a problem they want the patience, just now, to attempt to solve. But, were they to rise from the level of politics to that of statesmanship, and provide for the future as well as for to-day,

they would no more think of colonies of free people of color on this continent or its islands, than a pedestrian, in removing the stone that tripped him, would think of placing it where he must again fall over it.

Still, a great advance has been made. Colonization has, at last, become a matter for discussion in the halls of Congress ; and, having truth for its basis, discussion must lead to its development, and America and Africa be benefited by the result.

There is one thing, however, to be carefully avoided in this connexion. The idea of compulsion must not be associated with the scheme. The law of races is of itself competent to bring about every desirable result. It is of daily and hourly operation. It is felt at firesides, when husband and wife, talking over their affairs, recognise its force and agree that they "must go somewhere." It is felt in the fields, in the streets, in all the occupations in which the free colored people have heretofore found employment, and in all of which there is now standing, at the colored man's elbow, a white man, ready to take his place whenever he shall leave it, even if he does not, without reference to his wishes, actually eject him from it. In this way it affects communities and becomes powerful in the building up of nations. Depending, as does the colonization scheme, upon individual action for its results, there must be nothing connected with it against which individual pride may revolt—for pride is every day overruling interest and sacrificing happiness. Emigration must be left to the conviction of the parties that they will do better in another land ; and the silent working of the law of races, quickened by the pressure of a redundant population, will be all-sufficient, in due time, to make this conviction irresistible. There needs no other compulsion.

Nor are these the suggestions of mere expediency. They illustrate the constitutional provision upon which the American Colonization Society has acted from the beginning. It was then declared that

our object was “the removal of the free people of color, *with their own consent*, to Africa”—words which cannot be too often repeated or too strongly emphasized, as explanatory of the scope and meaning of the colonization scheme; and which alike prohibit our becoming the agents of any plan involving compulsion, and pledge us to leave to the free man of color, so far as we are concerned, the time, the place, and the occasion of his emigration.—All we can do is to facilitate his going. To this end our means, although limited—insignificant, indeed, comparatively—have hitherto been competent. They have sufficed to found the colony and to support it in its earlier stages, and until it has become merged in the Republic of Liberia; and, if we restrict the use of them to Africa, it is not because we would interfere with the colored man’s selection of a new home, but because it is our solemn conviction that in Africa alone can his people find a permanent abiding place. If lighthouses now crown the headlands of Cape Montserado and Cape Palmas, if churches and mission stations and school-houses now dot the coast from Cape Mount to the Cavalla, if steam sugar mills are at work on the St. Paul’s and steam saw-mills are busy on the Junk, if the trade between the seaboard settlements is carried on in vessels built in the yards of Monrovia, and if a foreign commerce is already prosecuted by merchant shipowners of Liberia, if all this has been done with such humble means as individual benevolence, and, sometimes, State appropriations have afforded, we may surely be permitted to say, without arrogance, that the blessing of the Almighty rests upon the choice which this Society has made of Africa as the future home of the free colored people of the United States.

But, unlike the strength of Milo, ours has not increased from day to day with our growing burden; and more efficient measures ought now to be adopted to promote the growth of the African Republic. Among the most important of these is the recognition

by this country of the Government of Liberia—most important to the latter, and far, very far, from unimportant to ourselves.

The United States, whose laws and institutions the Liberians have honorably illustrated in Africa, whose great names are perpetuated where Monrovia looks down upon the deep, where Clay Ashland marks the progress of civilization in the forest, where Harper stretches along the three hills of Palmas, and by many a stream and town besides, the United States, alone almost among the leading nations of the world, withholds its recognition of the Government of Liberia; and this, too, when within the last few years we have actually been dependent upon Liberia for the ability to fulfil our treaties with reference to the slave trade: for, had Liberia refused, as she might have done, to receive the more than four thousand recaptured Africans, who in that time have been landed on her shores, what would have become of them? North and South, here, alike unwilling to take charge of them, a crowd of naked savages, they must have been thrown upon the coast, remote from their respective tribes, to become again the victims of the nefarious traffic from which they had just been rescued,—a proceeding so repugnant to humanity that the withdrawal of every vessel of war maintained by us on the coast would have been preferable to its adoption. In lieu of this, Liberia received them, and distributed them among her Christian homes, where, from the last accounts, they are fast becoming qualified to have homes of their own, in which, before long, the prayers of grateful hearts will invoke blessings upon those who, in teaching the recaptives the arts of civilized life, have made them an example of what may be done throughout all Africa by such agencies as our Society has established there.

Whatever, then, may be the result of the present agitation of schemes of colonization, whether it may end in a still further postponement of the whole subject, or in immediate action, there ought to be no difficulty on the part of the United States in recog-

nizing the Government of Liberia, if only in acknowledgment of benefits actually derived from it.

And not only would the measure be just, but it would be expedient also. We are a nation of manufacturers as well as agriculturists. We want markets for the products of our inventive genius and mechanical skill. We have sought for them in China, and spent hundreds of thousands in obtaining them in Japan, while, at the same time, we voluntarily exclude ourselves from almost the only virgin market in the world. We suffer our commerce to be burdened with a discriminating duty of twelve per cent. on all goods imported into Liberia from this country, from which the recognition of her Government would exempt us; and the consequence is, that the trade from the United States, which was formerly a direct one, is now carried on in English vessels, or in American vessels sailing from British ports. France is seeking the interior of Africa up the Senegal, and from the Mediterranean, England is making her way to it from Sierra Leone, and Cape Coast Castle, and Lagos, and up the Zambesi, while the United States, with the peculiar facilities, which its relations to Liberia naturally afford, of accomplishing a commercial destiny in this connexion, such as France or England can never win, is neglecting its opportunities until they may be lost to it forever.

That the trade here referred to may be appreciated as it should be, it may be stated, that while, in 1853, the export of palm oil from Lagos was but one hundred and sixty tons, its declared worth in 1857 was \$5,314,000. In 1852 the whole export of cotton from Abeokuta was nine bags, weighing about eighteen hundred pounds in all. In 1859 it was 416,341 lbs. The quantity of palm oil sent annually from the western coast of Africa is at least sixty thousand tons, exceeding in value the product of a whale oil season. The quantity that reached Great Britain alone, in 1860, was 40,216 tons, while the exports of British goods to the West Coast amount-

ed, for the first six months of the same year, to \$3,656,310, being a gain of forty percent. on the export of 1858. The present extent of this trade is not so remarkable as its rapid increase, and the efforts which are making by European nations to encourage and obtain it.

But the pecuniary loss attending the destruction of our commercial intercourse with Africa, through Liberia, will not be the only result to be deplored should our present policy be persisted in.—Commerce has been the great agent of colonization from the days of the Phenicians down to the last arrival from Germany and Ireland in the harbor of New York. It is the only agent upon which reliance can be placed to accomplish the voluntary self-paying emigration to Africa, which will one day equal the emigration from Europe to America. With the necessity for such an emigration becoming daily more and more apparent, it is, unquestionably, as unwise as it is unstatesmanlike not to encourage, in every possible way, the commerce upon which, take place when it will, it must be dependant. Foster commerce with Liberia, and colonization will pay its own way, and our free colored population will pass from amongst us, voluntarily and quietly, in the natural order of events. Destroy this commerce—let its growth be hampered with restrictions—and Liberia must become a dependency of England, and we will have thrown into the hands of a rival all the advantages which Liberia yearns to accord to that land which, whatever the policy of the Government, is still the mother country of her people.

Nor are the means of transportation which commerce affords alone to be regarded in this connexion. Commerce assists in preparing for the reception of the immigrants, as it increases the population, multiplies the resources, and enhances the wealth of the cities where they land. The ship loads that now disappear in New York, as they are absorbed in the population that commerce has accumulated there, would have overwhelmed the village of New Amsterdam at any time

within the first twenty years after its establishment on the island of Manhattan. There is a law that regulates immigration according to the capacity of the particular locality, and which will operate in the colonization of Africa, as it has done in all the colonizations that have preceded it. As has been shown, in the case of the recaptives recently landed in Liberia, this capacity of the Republic is now upwards of four thousand per annum, even where the immigrants are mere barbarians. But there is no doubt that a still greater number could have been received had they been of the character sent from the United States, provided with more or less means, and acquainted with the occupations and having the habits of civilization. Indeed, it may be assumed, that Liberia is now prepared to receive any number of emigrants which, under any circumstances, may be landed there, until the removal of our free colored population shall be gradually and satisfactorily accomplished. African colonization is destiny. The colonization of America was slower in the beginning, and yet what a people we have become! The colonization of California was more rapid, because the gold there was more attractive to the adventurous of the United States than the religious persecutions of the Old World were repulsive to the Pilgrim Fathers. The colonization of Africa will be more certain than either was in the first instance; because, while persecution might have ceased in Europe, and the gold become exhausted in California, the law of races and the increase of population are inflexible and uncontrollable, and must be enduring in their operation, and absolutely certain in their results.

In whatever aspect, then, recognition presents itself, it is commended to our favorable consideration. It obviates a discrimination which hampers commerce; it encourages kind feeling, which no nation, however great, is the worse for, from any other nation, however small; it provides for exigencies that are daily becoming more momentous: but, above all, and beyond all, it is an act just in itself, which the United States should no longer withhold from a people

which exists through its philanthropy, is an illustration of its wisdom, and must be an agent in the fulfilment of the purposes of its God.

Nor, while we thus plead the cause of Liberia, is she speechless in her own behalf. It is no rock-bound coast, ramparted with ice, and under a howling sky, that receives the emigrant from America. The rich and luxuriant vegetation of the tropics comes down to the very borders of the sea ; and although here, as elsewhere upon earth, comfort and competence are to be won by toil alone, yet a climate congenial to the nature of the individual gives to industry its reward through all the seasons of the rolling year. The colored man is here his own master. The law of races here operates in his favor. It is his race which is the dominant one ; and, dependant as this law is, in this instance, upon climate, and not upon accident, it is his race which must be paramount forever ; and from Robertsport, under the shadow of Cape Mount, by Monrovia, where the first settlement was made, by Bassa, where rest the ashes of Buchanan, by Sinou, and Cape Palmas, and Cavalla, to the Rio Pedro, and from the coast line indefinitely towards the interior, are homes prepared for those whom circumstances, accumulating with the rapidity of the increase of an avalanche, will soon, measuring the time by the magnitude of the result, deprive of all freedom of choice, and leave no alternative but removal.

Members of the American Colonization Society: The chair, at the three anniversary meetings immediately preceding the installation of the present incumbent, was successively occupied by Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Charles Fenton Mercer. The West, the North, and the South—Kentucky, Massachusetts, and Virginia—were represented by them. The wonderful orator, the great expounder of the Constitution, the accomplished statesman and philanthropist, were united in the support and advocacy of our cause. The inspiration of their presence is still around us. Were we permitted to see them in dim perspectives of the spirit world—could another Beatrice, to an-

other Dante, point out their majestic shadows, as they listened to "the roll of the red artillery" and the tramp of the close columns of armed men which blasted the earth they had left green with the velvet garb of peace, would not Clay be seen, with impatient gesture, head thrown back, and foot advanced, and hand extended, filling the Senate house with the thunder of his voice? Webster, statuesque, with folded arms, darting, from beneath his massive brow, gleams of living fire, as he invoked a world's vengeance on the violators of the Constitution? And Mercer, calm and sorrowful, gazing from one to the other, as he prayed, with clasped palms, that eloquence and wisdom so combined might save his country? And would we not then seek counsel, if we might, from these bold, true patriots and statesmen, as to our own course in the sad emergency of the times.—But the dream of the poet is beyond our realization, and we can only recall to memory what has passed away forever—walking, here on earth, by the light which experience has afforded us, turning neither to the right hand nor the left from the principles which have guided us from the beginning, and finding, in the faith of Finley, that "he knew the scheme was from God," our warrant and our strength, in toiling through strife, as we have toiled in peace, to urge onward to a glorious end the grand cause of African Colonization.